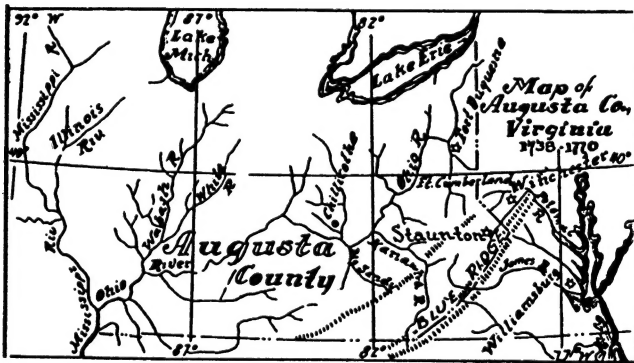


# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



JED HOTCHKISS

AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY – 1996-1998

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A purpose of the Augusta County Historical Society is to publish *Augusta Historical Bulletin* to be sent without charge to all members. Single issues are available at \$4.00 per copy.

The membership of the society is composed of annual and life members who pay the following dues beginning January 1995:

Annual (individual) .....	\$10.00
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Annual (sustaining) .....	\$30.00
Life Membership .....	\$150.00
Annual (Institutional) .....	\$10.00
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# Bethel Church and the Civil War<sup>\*</sup>

by  
Nancy L. Sorrells

## PART I

### **"The Perilous State of the Country" Politics and Religion in Augusta County, 1860-1865**

Long before Abraham Lincoln's election and inauguration, the subsequent firing upon Fort Sumter by the South, and the call to arms by the North, Francis McFarland was worried. The Presbyterian minister who immigrated to America as a child and grew up in Pennsylvania, long considered the Shenandoah Valley his true home. During most of the last thirty-seven years, he lived in Augusta County, one of the more prosperous areas of the Upper Shenandoah Valley. During those years, he steadfastly preached the word of God according to Presbyterians from the pulpit at Bethel Presbyterian Church. In addition, he built a prosperous farm, Rosemont, that thrived in part because of slave labor. He was also an active participant in educational endeavors of the region, attending local school exercises and sitting on the boards at both Washington College in Lexington and Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton. It was, then, with a great deal of anxiety that he opened his daily diary on January 15, 1860, and penned:

Day pleasant. Roads bad. Preached at Bethel to a good  
congn on the duty of praying for rulers...as it seemed to be  
called for from the present alarming state of public affairs,  
especially in Congress, as the House of Representatives has  
not been able to elect a speaker now for nearly six weeks.<sup>1</sup>

In the months and year ahead, the people of the Upper Shenandoah Valley would find themselves in a difficult position, one which received frequent and agonized mention in the pages of McFarland's diary. Although a slave-holding region, the people of the area were, above all else, patriots, loyal to a government and nation which they believed to be the finest on earth.<sup>2</sup> "Many white Augustans were steeped in a commercial tradition, possessed enough assets to have developed a keen awareness of economic activities, and cultivated devotion to a strong nationalism as the best guarantor of their interests," wrote Michael

<sup>1</sup>Francis McFarland diaries, January 15, 1860

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent and detailed analysis of the political situation in Augusta County from 1850 to 1861, see Michael David Lesperance's 1993 masters thesis from the University of Virginia, "Fighting for the Union: The Political Culture of Anti-Sectionalism in Augusta County, Virginia, 1850-1861." The thesis has been reprinted in the *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, Spring (pp. 11-46) and Fall 1994 (pp. 14-27) issues.

*\*Presented at the Spring 1996 meeting of the Society at Bethel Presbyterian Church*

David Lesperance whose 1993 University of Virginia master's thesis analyzed the political climate of Augusta County in the decade leading up to the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Almost as one, the people of the county expressed indignation at the sectionalism that was tearing their country apart. They dismissed with equal disgust the Black Republicans of the North and the flame-throwing secessionists of the Deep South.

As the crisis worsened, days of fasting and political meetings marked the election year of 1860. In February McFarland led a prayer day at Bethel "for the youth of our Country," while the Virginia Synod appointed November 1st a fast day in light of the "threatening aspect of our public affairs."<sup>4</sup> As election day neared, the tension mounted. Of the four candidates for president: Republican Lincoln, Southern Democrat John Breckinridge, Constitutional Unionist John Bell, and the mainline Northern Democrat, Stephen Douglas, only the latter two were considered viable choices in Augusta County. A September visit to Staunton by Douglas, "The Little Giant," drew a crowd estimated at three thousand according to the Staunton newspapers.<sup>5</sup> Supporters of the Union ticket held several October and early November rallies, one of which was attended by McFarland's youngest son, eighteen-year-old James. "A great political meeting in Staunton. James went," wrote McFarland. The papers described the meetings as "Grand Rallies for Old Augusta" by "The People Resolved to Save the Union!" Music, speeches, and banners strung across Staunton's streets were all part of the rallies as the people of Augusta clung desperately to the hope that the election would serve to preserve the Union.<sup>6</sup>

On Tuesday, November 6, 1860, Augusta men went to the polls in record numbers in an effort to stave off disaster. "Ring the Alarm Bell and vote for the Union Bell!" proclaimed the *Staunton Spectator*. "Save your country by voting for Bell and Everett!!"<sup>7</sup> McFarland had not voted in a presidential election for twenty years, since the election of William Henry Harrison, but in 1860, he "thought it my duty." He traveled to Greenville and cast his vote for John Bell and Edward Everett, but wrote that he felt "great anxiety about the result of this election."<sup>8</sup> Two-thirds of McFarland's fellow Augusta voters cast their votes in the same direction, for the Union slate, while most of the rest voted for Douglas. Together the two garnered ninety-five percent of the Augusta vote. Breckinridge received only 218 votes from the more than 3,800 votes cast. Not even on the ballot, Lincoln failed to receive a vote in the county.<sup>9</sup> Augusta County's majority vote coincided with Virginia which cast its fifteen electoral votes for Bell. Indeed, the county's combined vote for Bell and Douglas compared favorably with the combined national popular vote for these two candidates which represented forty-two percent of the total vote as opposed to Breckinridge's nineteen percent and Lincoln's thirty-nine percent. So, it could be argued that Augusta County was in the mainstream of political America in 1860, caught between two sectional extremes. Lincoln's votes were so concentrated in the more densely populated

<sup>3</sup>Michael David Lesperance, "Fighting for the Union," *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, Spring 1994, 19.

<sup>4</sup>McFarland diaries, November 2, 1860.

<sup>5</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, September 4, 1860.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, October 23, 1860.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, November 6, 1860.

<sup>8</sup>McFarland diaries, November 6, 1860.

<sup>9</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, November 13, 1860.

northern tier of states that he won a majority of the electoral college and was thus elected.<sup>10</sup>

With the election of Lincoln, however, and the subsequent withdrawal of South Carolina from the Union, the national crisis worsened. "How dark and distressing our country's prospects!" wrote fellow minister James Ramsey to McFarland on Christmas Day, 1860. Fearing a national fissure, the citizens of Augusta County appointed a committee which resolved that the Constitution of the United States was "the easiest yoke of government a free people ever bore, and yet the strongest protector of rights the wisdom of man ever contrived." Another of the committee's resolutions, while expressing sympathy with the Deep South, appealed with those states to unite with Virginia "in testing the efficacy of remedies provided by the Constitution and the Union."<sup>11</sup> As the nation's rift widened, McFarland's anxiety deepened. The arrivals of newspapers were greeted with nervous excitement about "the state of our country." From his study and from the pulpit, he did what he could. On January 11, 1861 he wrote to his representative in the legislature, Bolivar Christian, "in regard to the perilous state of the Country." Stepping foot into the political arena was apparently a new experience for the seventy-three-year-old McFarland. "This is the first letter I ever wrote, as far as I remember to exert political influence. But the Crisis demands the prayers & efforts of every good man," he confided in his diary. A month later he fired off similar letters to Captain James Henry and Governor John Letcher and received a reply from Christian "in regard to public affairs."<sup>12</sup>

The new year brought renewed debates about the possibility of calling a Virginia convention to discuss the state of the nation and what Virginia should do in the situation. Although opposed to the idea of a convention because of its secessionist overtones, Augusta County decided to send Unionist representatives once it was determined that a convention indeed would be called. Again breaking from his established pattern, McFarland and his two younger sons, drove a sleigh into Staunton on January 28 to hear candidates for the convention speak. Six men addressed the group described by McFarland as a "vast assembly," and by the *Staunton Vindicator* as a group crowded "as closely as herrings in a barrel." "They all profess to be union men, but some more conservative," wrote McFarland of the speakers. The election of the convention delegates took place on February 4, a day in which McFarland again planned to break from his non-political stance. "The election of members of the Convention took place to day. I had intended to have taken an active part in the election for the first time in my life, but god prevented me," he wrote.<sup>13</sup>

The state convention opened in Richmond on February 13, a date recorded in McFarland's diary with the addition of a fervent prayer: "May Wisdom from above guide them." For two months, the convention opposed secession even as the antagonistic flames licked at the country from all sides. McFarland, like the rest of the country, watched, and waited, and, of course, prayed. "Recd. President Lincoln's Inaugural Address which I read with deep interest. It leaves me in great doubt whether his policy will preserve the peace of the Country," he wrote in early March. In April, the rest of the dominoes fell in rapid order. Fort Sumter was fired upon April 12; Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to subdue the rebels

<sup>10</sup>Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 82-83.

<sup>11</sup>Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia, from 1726 to 1871* (Harrisonburg, Va.: C.J. Carrier Company, 1972), 454-455.

<sup>12</sup>McFarland diaries, February 11, 1861.

<sup>13</sup>McFarland diaries, February 4, 1861; and, Lesperance, *AHB*, Fall 1994.

on April 15; and the Virginia Convention reversed itself to pass the ordinance of secession on April 17, 1861, subject to the vote of the people on May 23, 1861.

In formerly pro-union Augusta County, a vote *for* secession was now a given, according to Lesperance in his thesis. He wrote:

The disintegration of Augusta's political culture, assaulted by the withdrawal of the Deep South from the Union and mocked by the remaining states, explains the county's nearly unanimous vote for secession. The people of Augusta County, among the last antebellum nationalists, believed that the compact which their parents and grandparents made with the other states of the federal Union had been broken...viewed through the eyes of people devoted to a concept they consistently read and wrote about, practiced and participated in, the decision was hardly a decision at all.<sup>14</sup>

As one of McFarland's friends and fellow clergymen, William Brown, explained: "Our beloved Virginia struggled hard, and nobly for peace: and at last she was not dragged by South Carolina, but driven by Lincoln."<sup>15</sup> Though he equated secession with revolution, when the convention's secession vote was put before the citizenry in May, McFarland voted in favor of the action, calling it the "most painful vote I ever gave." But, he added, "The Course of the Administration, making actual war upon the South to compel them to remain in the Union, or to return to it, seemed to leave me no alternative. I mourn in bitterness over the state of things, but Va. Did all she could for peace."<sup>16</sup> In Augusta County, the support of the ordinance was overwhelming, 3130 to 10. McFarland's precinct of Greenville, cast 206 "yes" ballots and only one man voted against secession.<sup>17</sup>

Although he felt out of place in the political arena, offering guidance through God was more in keeping with McFarland's line of work. In the days between the election and secession, he went about his chosen calling with extra zeal. Outgoing president, James Buchanan, appointed Friday, January 4, 1861 as a day of national fasting. In Staunton and

<sup>14</sup>Lesperance, *AHB*, Fall 1994, 27.

<sup>15</sup>William Brown, to Francis McFarland, 17 May 1861, Francis McFarland Papers, Department of History (Montreat), Montreat, North Carolina.

<sup>16</sup>McFarland diaries, May 23, 1861. As McFarland implies, Virginia was at the forefront in efforts to prevent war. In February, 1861, the Virginia State Legislature called together delegates from the states still in the Union for a meeting in Washington, D.C., known as the Peace Convention, under the Chairmanship of one of Virginia's favorite sons, former President John Tyler. The meeting was severely weakened by the absence of several states still in the Union as well as the seven seceded states of the Deep South. Eventually the hard work of the able delegation was a tragic and pathetic failure.

<sup>17</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, May 28, 1861. Of course, by the time of the referendum on May 23rd, Virginia unofficially made all of her military forces subject to call by the President of the Confederacy, and state troops occupied Union military facilities at Harpers Ferry and Norfolk. Also, Robert E. Lee resigned from the United States army and was given command of the state's military forces. Last, but not least, the Virginia Convention offered Richmond as the new Confederate capital, an offer accepted by the new nation.

Augusta County, the people took the meaning of the day to heart. Stores were closed, business was suspended, and many churches held services.<sup>18</sup> "This is a day of Fasting, humiliation & prayer, appointed by James Buchanan, President of the U.S. In view of the threatening aspect of our public affairs," McFarland wrote of the occasion. "I rejoiced at the appointment. We had a good Congn. Four Elders prayed appropriately. I prayed & made two addresses. I trust God will hear his people."<sup>19</sup>

As April drew to a close, the course had been set and battlelines were being drawn, contingent only upon the ratification of the secession ordinance by Virginia's citizens. On Sunday, April 28, he preached to a large congregation at Bethel. The subject? Our duty as a Christian Congregation in time of war. How quickly things changed on the Augusta County front. On Thursday, June 13, 1861, six months after the community turned out in response to President Buchanan's call for a national fast day, the citizens of the area were again urged to attend a day of fasting and prayer, this one appointed by President Jefferson Davis of the Southern Confederacy. All business for the day was suspended according to McFarland, and a large congregation, including a gallery full of slaves, attended services at Bethel. At 4:00 p.m., McFarland attended another prayer meeting in Greenville, while a simultaneous service went on a few miles away. The religious feeling in the community pleased the elderly minister who wrote: "I feel greatly encouraged by the character of these meetings. If they were generally such, it is a token for good from God, who has inclined men's hearts to pray."<sup>20</sup>

As it became apparent that a bloody civil war was the course chosen by the nation, the lines between politics and religion became increasingly blurred. On Sunday, July 28, 1861, McFarland found himself exhorting his congregation to "offer up their united thanksgiving & praise for the mighty deliverance wrought on last Sabbath in the glorious victory obtained at Manassas." It was a day of thanksgiving appointed by the Confederate Congress, and McFarland preached and glorified God in the name of the Confederacy again in the afternoon.<sup>21</sup>

Once he had been pulled back into politics, McFarland seemed to accept the necessity of participation. In August of 1861 he visited the Gibson family and noted in his diary that "They are much afflicted & take wrong views of our Political affairs." On a Wednesday in November, he rode to Greenville to vote in his second presidential election in twelve months, but this time he cast his vote for Jefferson Davis.<sup>22</sup>

A nation divided meant the creation of new governments, both secular and ecclesiastical. Just as McFarland had to resolve his loyalties toward the new Confederate government, so, too, did he have to make decisions about the national Presbyterian Church. Although the Presbyterian church had successfully withstood the sectionalist strife that had torn at its edges since the 1830s, it could not withstand civil war. Fellow Presbyterian William Brown opined in May 1861 that the national church could not possibly remain intact: "I have now scarcely a hope left that our church can survive as one church. But surely we ought to refrain from anything rash, and do nothing ahead of the lights of Gods providence."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Waddell, 455-456.

<sup>19</sup>McFarland diaries, January 4, 1861.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1861.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 1861.

<sup>23</sup>William Brown, to Francis McFarland, 17 May 1861, Montreat.



In late May of 1861, the General Assembly (the national governing body of the Presbyterian church) convened in Philadelphia. McFarland and William White of Rockbridge County had been appointed to attend the meeting, but feared for their safety in crossing what would now be enemy lines. On May 8, the Reverend Samuel Brown penned an anguished letter to McFarland expressing his fear of the imminent collapse of the national church:

It seems now a matter of great doubt whether either the Commissioners or documents from the South will reach Philadelphia this spring. Indeed, so far as I can now see, I cannot think it the duty of our Southern members to attempt to go. In all probability, even should they reach the City without molestation, there would be some wicked Abolitionists there ready to insult & even mob them.<sup>24</sup>

On May 9, McFarland received a letter stating that railroad lines had been restored and that he could travel to Washington, D.C. and thence to Philadelphia, but he declined the offer, having already written to the Reverend White two days before explaining that he would not attend. White agreed that the pair would be better served by not making the trip "least we suffer from the hands of violence." He added: "Though so much pained, I was not surprised at your determination. I have no doubt you have resolved wisely, and I shall most assuredly follow your example."<sup>25</sup>

Very few of the South's Presbyterians made it to the National Assembly either because they feared for their safety or because their loyalties now lay somewhere else. From the Virginia Synod, only two men arrived, both from the area that later became West Virginia.<sup>26</sup> Those Southerners who arrived were admonished by the assembly and urged to remain loyal to the Union on Biblical grounds found in Romans 13.<sup>27</sup> After heated debate in

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Brown, to Francis McFarland, 8 May 1861, Montreat.

<sup>25</sup>William White, to Francis McFarland, 9 May 1861, Montreat.

<sup>26</sup>In the mountains just to the west of Augusta County, Unionist sentiment remained strong, and conventions met in May and June of 1861 to consider steps to counteract the ordinance of secession, thereby putting into motion a chain of events which led to the establishment of the present state of West Virginia in 1863.

<sup>27</sup>James H. Smylie, *American Presbyterians: A Pictorial History* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Historical Society, 1985), 105. The text of Romans 13 from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* is as follows: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due."

the assembly, the "Spring Resolutions" were passed which, among other things, declared it the obligation of the Presbyterian Church "to strengthen, uphold, and encourage the Federal Government in the exercise of all its functions under our noble Constitution."<sup>28</sup>

The course for McFarland, and the majority of the Southern Presbyterians, was in a different direction. By mid-summer, the aging minister had produced an article for the *Central Presbyterian*, Virginia's Presbyterian newspaper, urging the formation of "the General Assembly of the Confederate States of America." In September, the Lexington Presbytery dissolved its relation with the General Assembly and offered to cooperate in the formation of a General Assembly in the Confederacy, appointing McFarland as a commissioner to attend such a formative meeting. In October, McFarland attended the synod meeting in Petersburg and, as the chairman of a committee on the "present & prospective State of the Pbn. Ch in the Confederate States," he helped lay the groundwork for a breakaway General Assembly. In November, when he was nearly seventy-four years old, he boarded a train bound for Augusta, Georgia, where he was to be a representative at the General Assembly called to form the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Fraught with uncertainty during the best of times, the trip made by the elderly minister in wartime was amazing, but something he surely would have felt was a necessary sacrifice for God. Making the five-day trip even more arduous was the fact that his train wrecked on the way down to Georgia, although the passengers were spared injury. The meeting was held at the First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, the sanctuary presided over by the Reverend Joseph Ruggles Wilson.<sup>29</sup> As the meeting opened on December 4, 1861, Wilson and Dr. William Brown came to McFarland and asked him to organize the assembly until a moderator and clerks could be chosen. He agreed and nominated Benjamin M. Palmer who was elected moderator of the assembly. McFarland was appointed Chairman of the Committee of Bills and Overtures, "a most important trust," he noted in his diary.<sup>30</sup>

The Georgia meeting resulted in the formation of the Presbyterian church in the Confederate States of America. An address was sent from the meeting to all churches explaining the reasons for the Presbyterian division, defending slavery, and praising the "spirituality" which was not found among the former Northern colleagues. In addition, the assembly prayed for the Confederate cause. On December 16, McFarland wrote: "Thus terminated this assembly remarkable for the harmony & good Spirit that prevailed. The God of life & peace was certainly with Us."<sup>31</sup>

The newly formed churches of the South never had a chance to carry on normal ecclesiastical operations. From the beginning, much of their energy was committed to the Confederate cause, both on a government level and on a more personal level with the soldiers. The worries for these spiritual leaders were twofold. Not only did they have to con-

<sup>28</sup>Howard McKnight Wilson, *The Lexington Presbytery Heritage* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1971), 117.

<sup>29</sup>Although a competent minister in his own right, Joseph Ruggles Wilson is best remembered as the father of Thomas Woodrow Wilson, who became the twenty-eighth president of the United States. The Reverend Wilson and McFarland were old friends, and the future president was born in Staunton while his father presided over the Presbyterian church there. Wilson consulted McFarland about his removal to Georgia in 1857.

<sup>30</sup>McFarland diaries, December 5, 1861; Smylie, 106.

<sup>31</sup>Smylie, 106 and McFarland diaries, December 16, 1861.

tend with division among the national churches, but they had to reach and convert the thousands of young men who would soon be dying in battle so they could go to heaven. The Reverend Samuel Brown pondered this problem in a May 1861 letter to McFarland: "The cloud indeed is a dark & threatening one. There is no place where we can hide & be in safety, but in God. But what is to become of those who rush to the field of battle & are unprepared to die."<sup>32</sup>

Many of the efforts of McFarland and the Confederate Presbyterian Church were aimed at insuring a good supply of appropriate Christian reading material for the soldiers. As the years of the war rolled one unto another, McFarland periodically called on the Bethel congregation to donate money for the purchase of religious tracts, among them the *Soldier's Visitor*; Bibles; and periodicals, like the *Central Presbyterian*. In August 1861 the congregation gave five dollars "to procure religious reading for the Soldiers," while in September 1862, the church gave \$100.50 as a thank offering for the Confederate States Bible Society. The generous outpouring on that day was the result of Bethel services held because President Davis had asked that Thursday be set aside "as a day of thanksgiving to God for our recent Victories." In April 1864, and again in early April 1865, the congregation gave money so that the soldiers would have religious material to read. On several occasions, both McFarland and his wife also personally sent funds for the soldiers to buy newspapers.<sup>33</sup>

On a more ecumenical level, McFarland cooperated with The Evangelical Tract Society which was "chiefly occupied in distributing Tracts to our Soldiers, in the Army and in Hospitals." The publishing committee, which was comprised of one man each from the Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal and Methodist churches, noted that "many a dying soldier has found the valley of the shadow of death illuminated by the glorious light which streams from the pages of a little tract!" "Brother McFarland" was contacted several times by tract society members with pleas to raise money for the distribution of the tracts. The society, noted one agent, "is now doing a noble work in supplying our army with religious literature." The Presbyterian publications committee was doing its part as well. In late 1864, McFarland received a circular from that committee appealing to the churches for enlarged contributions as publication costs soared. "Meanwhile the demand for army reading is greater than ever, and the cost of publishing is constantly increasing. All our supplies, too, -- paper, printing, binding &c., must be paid for in cash. What are we to do? Stop? Deny our gallant soldiers this small gratification, and this means of good? Surely not."<sup>34</sup>

The various Christian groups operating in the South during the Civil War felt under no obligation to separate relationships between the church and the new government. On the contrary, the Evangelical Tract Society seized the opportunities to convert even at the highest governmental level. In December 1861, McFarland received a letter from A.W. Miller, the Presbyterian representative of the tract society. There were two causes for concern: Sabbath mail delivery and recognition by the Confederate government of the supreme authority of God. Miller asked McFarland to distribute a circular and petition created by the tract society condemning Sunday mail delivery. Miller lamented:

It makes the heart of every Christian Patriot in the South, sad, very sad, to think, that our Young Government, around which

<sup>32</sup>Samuel Brown, to Francis McFarland, 8 May 1861, Montreat.

<sup>33</sup>McFarland diaries, August 27, 1861-April 2, 1865 passim.

<sup>34</sup>McFarland, Montreat, miscellaneous folder.

we clustered all our affections, and on which are fixed all our hopes, has made little, if any advance, morally, beyond the Old Government; and particularly, that it is, equally with the Old, a habitual Sabbath-breaker in the sight of God.<sup>35</sup>

Miller also asked that McFarland petition the General Assembly to ask for an abolishment of "the wicked and unnecessary practice of Sunday mails, and thus preserve our beloved Confederacy from the just & certain judgments of a Holy God, and from merited destruction." In addition, he requested McFarland ask that the Assembly petition the new government to insert into the new constitution: "a distinct recognition of the Headship and Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over us, as a people."<sup>36</sup>

More than anything else, McFarland appeared to feel that the word of God was needed among the people during this time of crisis. It was certainly needed among the soldiers who needed God's support on the battlefield, and it was needed by the local community who had to continue with their daily lives despite worries about family members, shortages of staples and, at times, incursions from the enemy. Perhaps one of the most important links between the two spheres, the army camp and the home front, was General Thomas J. Jackson. Jackson was a deacon in the Lexington Presbyterian church and a good friend of McFarland's long before the war. Many area soldiers, including one of McFarland's sons, served under Jackson, in the famous Stonewall Brigade. The close ties were obvious and McFarland did all he could to strengthen those ties. In 1861, he paid a personal visit to Jackson who was encamped with the Army of Northern Virginia outside of Centreville. There he stayed in Jackson's tent, slept on the General's own cot, and prayed with the staff. To Presbyterians in the Upper Valley, Jackson epitomized a soldier of the cross. Such was McFarland's worry for his fellow Presbyterian that in June, 1862 he dispatched a letter to the Reverend Mr. Robert L. Dabney, Jackson's chief-of staff, urging him to protect the general from harm. "I request you to beseech him, in my name, & that of many other friends, not to expose his life but in cases of urgent necessity."<sup>37</sup> Later in 1862, McFarland received a letter from Richmond from another Presbyterian minister, William Brown, describing Jackson's piety and how it was contributing to the conversion of General Richard Ewell:

He (Ewell) has been deeply interested for a good while past, dating before his wound at Manassas. He refers his impressions to his intercourse with Gen. Jackson. On the evening before the battle of Cedar Hill (I think it was) Gen. Jackson sent for Gens. Ewell and Whiting to come to his tent for Consultation about the operations of the next day. After a full Conference they asked him what his conclusion was. "I will tell you in the morning," was his reply. As they left his tent, Gen. Whiting who's an irreligious man said to Gen. E - "I suppose Jackson wants to pray all night over the matter." About an hour after he, Gen E, had occasion to return on some unexpected business, and upon opening the tent door found the General kneeling in prayer. He says he felt that Gen.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.; A.W. Miller, to Francis McFarland, 6 December 1861, Montreat.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Wilson, 118.



Jackson had something which he had not, and became convinced that there was a power in religion which it was of supreme importance he should secure.<sup>38</sup>

Brown recorded the above story because he was certain McFarland "would be interested to know this fact." McFarland must have been very interested in the letter and may have even included it in his Sabbath message from the pulpit as he did a personal letter he received from Jackson. He deemed the correspondence, written by the general on July 31, 1862, "most admirable" and read the entire two-page document to his congregation on August 10, immediately before prayer. "I am grateful to you for your prayers to God for the success of the operations which God has intrusted to me," wrote Jackson. "It cheers my heart to think that many of God's people are praying to Our Ever Kind Heavenly Father for the success of the Army....," he continued. Jackson concluded with a personal note to his friend in God: "Praying for a continuation of your usefulness I remain your much attached friend."<sup>39</sup>

The two had chance to communicate again later in 1862 when McFarland spearheaded a resolution from the Lexington Presbytery offering prayer for Jackson and his army. McFarland apparently used the above mentioned letter at the presbytery to gather unanimous support for the resolution. It was further suggested by the Reverend E.D. Junkin that McFarland send copies of the letter to be published in both the religious and secular newspapers of the South because:

Gen. Jackson is esteemed all over the South & his letter is a most excellent one & would do great good I think if it were published... I know Jackson shrinks from publicity, but I think his letter alone would do more towards setting people to praying, & towards bringing honor to the course of true religion than all the resolutions our religious organizations can pass.<sup>40</sup>

It is not known whether McFarland ever followed Junkin's suggestion and forwarded Jackson's letter to Confederate newspapers for publication. He did send Jackson a copy of the Presbytery's resolution, which elicited the following response from Stonewall:

Your kind Christian letter of the 16th inst with the accompanying resolutions have been received. I write this note to thank

<sup>38</sup>William Brown, to Francis McFarland, 16 October 1862, Montreat.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas Jonathan Jackson papers, Virginia Military Institute's special collections.

<sup>40</sup>E.D. Junkin, to Francis McFarland, 8 September 1862, Montreat. Junkin was the minister at New Providence Presbyterian Church near Brownsburg in Rockbridge County, just a few miles from Bethel Church. The Lexington Prebytery resolution read, in part: "Gen. T.J. Jackson, who has gone from among us, a Brother beloved; who in the Providence of God, has been appointed especially to the command of that portion of the army charged with our defense in this part of the State...And as it is known to us that the General above named greatly desires & highly prizes the prayer of his christian friends, offered in behalf of him & the army under his command, we hereby pledge ourselves to him & them that we will pray to the Lord of Hosts that he may protect them & grant them abundant success in the defence of our country."

you for having so effectively(?) complied with my requests, and to ask that your prayers and christian efforts be continued as before requested. My trust is in God, and it is a great comfort to know that he answers prayer. I am very thankful to our Kind Heavenly Father for restoring you to health. I hope that both your sons, if not entirely well at present soon will be. Your much attached friend T.J. Jackson.<sup>41</sup>

The spirituality of the soldiers was an utmost concern in McFarland's life and one which he worried and prayed about constantly. At the onset of the war, none of his three sons had been accepted into the church membership and he agonized over the possibility that they should be taken before they accepted Jesus Christ. McFarland's continued concern was reflected in his 1862 diary notes from the Lexington Presbytery meeting: "Rev. Richard McIlwaine preached a good Sermon. He is the Chaplain of the 44 Regt. Va. Volunteers." McIlwaine appeared before the group to enter a plea for more army chaplains in light of the "religious condition of the army of the Alleghany." The Presbytery responded by sending four additional ministers to the army and many of these chaplains played a part in the religious revivals that spread through the army camps, particularly Jackson's, in late 1862. The army revivals reached their climax among the Virginia Confederates during the winter of 1863-1864, according to Presbyterian historian Howard McKnight Wilson, and many soldiers took the opportunity when home on leave to join their churches.<sup>42</sup> The worry over the conversion of the soldiers remained with McFarland and his fellow followers of God throughout the war, and in October 1863 he listened attentively to several "Very interesting addresses on the State of religion in the Army," while at the state synod.<sup>43</sup>

McFarland's two youngest sons were both caught up in the camp revivals and had joined the church by war's end. James wrote to his father "in a delightful Christian spirit," in July 1863, while in September a letter from Robert included a certificate of his church membership after being received into the church at camp. Robert came home on leave shortly thereafter and, on Sunday, September 30, 1863, he took his first communion at Bethel. "May God abundantly bless it to him," his father wrote.<sup>44</sup> James was not converted until 1864 when, as a prisoner of War in Fort Delaware, he participated in a "glorious revival" much to the delight of his father.

In Francis McFarland's life, there was no clear separation between his work for God within the church, the military, and the government, and he called upon the people of his congregation to pray for and support all three. During the war, there were at least ten national days of fasting, thanksgiving and prayer appointed by the Confederate government. McFarland took these appointments very seriously, holding services at Bethel and asking the congregation to pray for the government and the military. On February 27, 1863, on one such day of "fasting, humiliation & Prayer," he noted that "The Congn. at Bethel was large & it was to me an interesting day. May God grant an answer to our prayers, in this awful crisis of our affairs."<sup>45</sup>

Away from the Bethel sanctuary, McFarland continued to be the dutiful public servant

<sup>41</sup>Jackson papers, VMI.

<sup>42</sup>Wilson, 199-120.

<sup>43</sup>McFarland diaries, October 23, 1863.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 1863.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

that he had been for the Union. Feeling it his duty to now actively participate in political affairs because of the national crisis, he continued to vote in elections under the Confederate government. In 1863, he noted that he went to Greenville to vote, something he had rarely done during his life but "in these times I regard it as duty to vote for good men." During the pre-war years, careful financial planning and sound agricultural practices had allowed him to amass a comfortable amount of money. During the war, he invested heavily in government stocks and bonds and encouraged his children to do so as well. Certificates were another financial investment during the war. It was a way of aiding the army and avoiding taxes. According to articles in the Staunton newspaper, these certificates, which were offered at various rates of interest, were assigned like stock certificates and used by the government to purchase supplies. "If our farmers will exchange their supplies for these certificates, they will not only secure an investment free from taxes, but will aid to that extent to keep down the expenses of the Government," noted an article in the 1864 *Staunton Spectator*. Certificates could also be assigned to those who turned in excess bond amounts in paying taxes. "For example," explained the editor of the *Staunton Spectator*, "if a citizen's tax be seven hundred dollars, and he give in a certificate of deposit, for one thousand dollars, he will receive a new certificate for three hundred dollars."<sup>46</sup> McFarland invested in the new government stocks and bonds as early as 1862, and received a dividend of \$12.28 on January 1, 1863. June 1863 marked a flurry of McFarland's investment activity in both Virginia and Confederate bonds. On June 4, he rode to Staunton and invested \$1,500 in eight percent Confederate bonds and deposited the bonds in the Central Bank. He also procured \$500 worth in seven percent bonds, but received "not the bond, but only a Certificate." He invested money again on June 6 and June 12. On June 12, he recorded in his diary: "Thus I now have \$1000. In Va. Six's \$2000 in Confed. 8's & 1000 in Confed 7's in all \$4,000." In January, 1864, he went back to Staunton and withdrew the dividends on his Virginia and Confederate stock, \$149.89 for him and \$89.34 for his daughter Mary. In 1864, McFarland took the government up on its offer of using bonds in tax payment. "Gave my Check to E.M. Taylor, Cashr. For \$700. To be invested in 4 pr.Ct. Bonds for the payment of my own & Mary's taxes."<sup>47</sup>

Maintaining a government involved in a long, drawn-out war was an incredible draw on the South and taxes were steep. In the Valley, farmers were obligated to pay a tithe of their produce to the government or turn in an amount of money equal to the tithe. Those who failed to meet the filing deadline, were slapped with a fifty percent penalty. A local newspaper article warned farmers of the consequences of not tithing, and added: "The Government needs the products and not money, and will not receive the latter in lieu of the former except where the collection of the products is impracticable."<sup>48</sup> On December 20, 1864, McFarland recorded in his diary of giving his tithe of hay which equaled two wagon loads.<sup>49</sup>

Although the minister recorded several instances of paying war tax, there were far more records of his selling produce to the government. "Transferred 10 BIs. To 20 Govt. Bags which I have sold to the Govt. At \$7.25 per BI," he wrote in August 1862. The next day he delivered the bags to Captain Henderson, the commissary agent in Staunton and

<sup>46</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, March 29 and April 12, 1864.

<sup>47</sup>McFarland diaries, December 22, 1862-March 17, 1864 passim.

<sup>48</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, February 2, 1864.

<sup>49</sup>McFarland diaries, December 20, 1864.

received payment of \$72.50. In 1863 he sold bacon, flour, oats, hay and corn to the government. In 1864, he sold pork, wheat and oats. In 1865, during the last gasp of the Confederacy, he continued to supply the government, although there was no profit to be made. In January 1865, he gave the government a wagon load of straw and on April 8 he made the following diary entry: "Mr. Benjn. F. McClung came to get flour for the Army. I let him have Four Barrels - the Govt give \$400. Per B. In an order on the Treasy. Where I presume there is no money."<sup>50</sup>

By the time McFarland wrote these words, it must have been obvious to everyone that the end was near. A few months earlier, in January, the subject of McFarland's Sunday sermon had been "The Lord's controversy with us as a nation." In February, he had recorded news of a peace committee going to Washington, D.C. to negotiate an end to the troubles. "Alas! I have not the slightest hope; from the temper of our enemies that any thing will be accomplished. May God bless the effort," he wrote. Finally, in April news filtered back to the devastated Valley that the war was over. In Augusta County, McFarland as well as the community around him must have felt an overwhelming sense of emptiness that what they had struggled for was lost, but they must also have had a sense of relief. The surrender at Appomattox, however, did not immediately make the nation whole again. Even those, like McFarland, who were never involved in the clashes on the battlefield had to make an effort to come back to the Union. That effort was called the Oath of Amnesty. In the July 11, 1865 issue of the *Staunton Spectator*, the oath was explained to Valley citizens:

A strange delusion prevails in regard to the propriety of taking the oath of amnesty. Many seem to think that there is no necessity for taking it and that they can take it or not, as happens to suite the fancy of individuals. This is a dangerous error, and one which should be promptly dispelled. Under existing laws of the U. States, every citizen of the Southern States, [with very few exceptions] has been guilty of treason. Treason consists not only in waging war against the United States, but in giving "aid and comfort" to its enemies.<sup>51</sup>

According to the newspaper article, McFarland was required to take the oath because "aid and comfort" included anyone who had ever aided or assisted the Confederate Government in any form or shape, directly or indirectly. Technically, when he voted in the elections, raised money for soldiers, gave or sold provisions to the government and bought government war bonds, he was committing treason. To be pardoned of treason and participate in the civil affairs of the community, the oath *had* to be taken. For a clergyman, for instance, failure to take the oath meant that he could no longer perform weddings. Therefore, on July 27, 1865, Francis McFarland "reluctantly set out for Greenville." There in the village he was administered the Oath of Amnesty "to authorize me to solemnize Marriage." At 8:00 o'clock that evening he married Matthew Thompson McClure and Sarah Catharine Bumgardner. It was the first of what was a flurry of marriages, both black and white, that he performed once peace returned to the Countryside.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup>McFarland diaries, April 8, 1865.

<sup>51</sup>*Staunton Spectator*, July 11, 1865.

<sup>52</sup>McFarland diaries, 1865.

The perilous state of affairs that McFarland had felt such dread about in 1860 had probably been worse than anyone's imagination. But the community that had struggled so hard for the Union a little more than four years earlier was ready to make a go of it again. In the spring of 1865, as the soldiers were returning home ready to once again walk behind a plow rather than a cannon, the seventy-seven-year-old man stood in the pulpit at Bethel church and again issued a charge to his congregation. The subject? "Our duty now to the U.S. as Christian Citizens."



## Facts and Fictions

by  
Stephanie K. Hicks\*

The following essay combines fact and fiction concerning some of the events in the lives of Jesse Rolston, Jr. and his wife, Mary Catherine Cromer Rolston. The facts were obtained from the book ....*"until separated by death"*, Lives and Civil War Letters of Jesse Rolston, Jr. & Mary Catherine Cromer. This book was published by Joyce DeBolt Miller. While attending Bridgewater College at the turn of the century, it became evident to her that the scars of the Civil War had not fully been healed after nearly a hundred years.

The letters in this book came to light when her husband, Richard Ralston Miller, great grandson of the patriarch, was helping his uncle Ernest Ralston clean out his Dayton homestead in preparation to move to the Bridgewater Retirement Village. There was an old feedsack about to be thrown into the fire, and Richard questioned what was in it. Uncle Ernest said it was "just junk" but Richard insisted on seeing it before it was burned and therefore saved these hundreds of family documents including the letters. After reading most of the letters I began to put some of the facts into the following story. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it. The Civil War era is my favorite time in history.

When I think of the history of Augusta County, I think of the Civil War. Most people are surprised to hear that Augusta County played such a large role in this tragic event. When people think of historical figures, they tend to lean toward the more "important people" in the history books. However, my interests lie in the lives of the common people affected by the war. This is the point of view of a simple Virginian from Augusta County, Mary Catherine Cromer Rolston.

### JESSE

The date was July 16, 1861. The day which I thought was to be the saddest day of my life. My husband, Jesse, and some of his friends left our house early that morning. When my dear Jesse went to town, there was usually a great deal of excitement. I don't believe there was one time Jesse came back from town without something special for me....as if we could afford it. Unfortunately, the usual excitement was not to be found in me or my five beautiful children. You see, this time he was not going into town only to come back with unaffordable goodies, but to join the Confederacy in Staunton. That morning, my husband was separated from us, and his friends, and mustered into Company D of the 52nd Virginia Infantry.

New recruits were allowed to return to their family one last time; not for goodbyes, but for supplies. My husband, along with his friends, were asked to return with a blanket, a change of clothes, a gun and ammunition, if they had it.

*\*Winner of the essay contest for Middle School Division; a student at Grace Christian School.*

As I saw Jesse ride away, I realized for the first time that he may never come back! The odds were against us. My dear Jesse! Leaving our children and me to fight for a patriotic cause he only vaguely understood! As I watched him ride off into the sunset, my anger melted into anguish. My dear Jesse! Don't leave me! Come back!

Autumn came and with the war there was no money for schooling. I tried to help my eldest daughter keep up with her studies, but soon I gave up and converted to cross-stitch. Besides, we had a farm to run, cattle and pigs to feed, and our days were long and hard. Without Jesse, the last thing I wanted was to farm. In my heart, I knew I must keep the farm running and in the best shape I could for my beloved to come home to. Jesse! I need you! Harvesting was usually such a happy time; gathering in the apples, digging the potatoes, preparing for winter. Without Jesse, it was not happy...it was work. The children helped and did more than their share for their tender ages. Somehow, we must keep our faith in God, that this war would soon be over, and Jesse would be coming home.

Christmas came all too soon. The best Christmas meal I could give to my children was one of our poor faithful chickens which was happily eaten by my children and me on Christmas Day. I could only think of Jesse. Where was he? Was he alive? Why haven't I heard from him?

Finally, on January 12 1862, I received my first letter from my beloved husband! Thank God! He was well, but I could tell he was very homesick. Although he was no scholar, his words touched my heart.\*\*\*\*(Copied from "...until separated by death" page 10)

#### *Camp Alegany*

*January the 9*

*Dear wife*

*This is to inform you that i am well and hoaping that this may find you and all the family injoying that great blessing with health. my foot that i cut is still imporving it is doing better that I expected. i never hadd it unraaped until yester eavening. i can get about very well to take evry thing in consideration. we have winter heare. The snow is about 4feet deep and it is blllustery here this morning. Mr Huffer got to our camp the 7th and we war glad to see them. We like to see our neighbors come if we cant go to see them. Mr Huffer he has had the misfortune to hurt his foat and leg and so we booth are on the same list. we stay together and it dont go so loansome. i was glad to heare that you have plenty to eat and to ware and plenty of wood and now I am satisfied that you have a good fier and keep warm and not suffer from want of some to eat and keep warm. we have plenty of wood and plenty to eat too and god cabbin to stay in, but still i think of you oft times so i shal bring this letter to a close iwith sending my love to one whom i love beyond all others Mary C Rolston*

*Jesse Rolston*

*rite to me*

*as soon and when you can*

That simple letter was enough to keep me running for a good two weeks. After that, I was back in the same predicament all over again. To my relief, I soon received another letter, not only telling me of his love and missing me and the children, but to buy sheep! In his letter, he explained that the Confederacy needed uniforms, and those uniforms were made of wool. Buying sheep would both earn money and save money by spinning the wool for our own clothes and selling a portion of it. How would I ever survive without Jesse's wisdom! Although I didn't want to hurt my beloved Jesse, I had never wanted to lead an agricultural life! Now he wanted me to raise sheep, too! I knew that I could not disappoint Jesse! The next morning I bought 25 sheep!

Sheep were just the beginning of my worries! About five weeks later, I sent our five year old son, Johnny out to feed the pigs, the sheep and Godspeed, our horse. Seconds later, little Johnny came running back to the house calling me frantically. When I finally calmed him down, he told me to come to the barn. There, to my terror, was poor Godspeed, lying on his side. His eyes were red and swollen. Although I was overwhelmed with fear and panic, I tried to stay calm for Johnny's sake. I told him we would write to Daddy and everything would be all right. As I wrote to Jesse, I wondered what would happen if poor Godspeed died. Without him, we had no transportation and there was no way to farm. Buying another horse was out of the question. Just the thing I needed was to go into debt! As these thoughts overwhelmed my emotions, I forced myself to keep writing the letter. Perhaps we could save Godspeed, if Jesse wrote back in time. I finished the letter and tucked it into the box of supplies I had packed for Jesse. He needed socks and a blanket because the ones he had were wearing thin. Mr. Huffer, one of our neighbors, was going to Jesse's camp and told me he would deliver the box. I asked him to tell Jesse to write back so he could bring me his answer. I did not tell Mr. Huffer about Godspeed.

Jesse was on the picket when Mr. Huffer arrived and so he left the box and returned home without a letter. One week passed. Godspeed was up and would eat a little, but she just looked sick. I was worried. Twelve days later, Jesse's letter was in hand. He told me to get Mr. Anthony to look at Godspeed. He would know how the mare was supposed to look. Mr. Anthony would be by at first light tomorrow. I didn't sleep that night. Thoughts of worry and confusion crossed my mind. "If Godspeed dies, will Jesse be disappointed with me? Will he be angry? Will morning ever come?"

Mr. Anthony arrived as promised, and we walked to Godspeed's stall. He took one look at the horse, and to my disappointment and confusion, chuckled merrily. "What's so funny!" I asked sharply. "Oh, nothing is the matter with this horse." Mr. Anthony mused. "Godspeed is ready to foal!" Embarrassed, but relieved I shouted "Praise the Lord!" Not only had my prayers been answered, but we would soon have a colt, too! Overwhelmed with joy, I forgot my manners and raced to the house to write Jesse. Johnny said Mr. Anthony was still chuckling when he left. As my pen scratched the wonderful news to Jesse, I realized that this had been the happiest day in my life since my beloved had left for the war.

As the days passed, each morning Johnny was up at 6:00 A.M. to see if Joy Surprise Rolston had been born into the world yet. Each morning he came back with the same response, "Not yet," he would say glumly as he sat down to his warm biscuits and bacon.

One morning Johnny left for his inspection of the stall. To my shock, he did not come back dragging his feet, but racing his little heart out. As I tried to calm him down, I asked if Joy Surprise had been born. Innocently he answered, "Well, her waist up is!" "Oh my!" I exclaimed as we all jumped up from the table and raced out the door. By the time we got to the stall, there she was! A beautiful new foal! (I still believe it was a miracle that she was born without help.) I wrote Jesse and told him the good news.



The next day I went to the store to mail the letter. When I entered, I couldn't believe what I saw. I found my good friend Elizabeth, sobbing at a table in the general store. When I asked what was wrong, her cousin answered in a hushed voice, "Henry....he....was killed." Elizabeth's sobs grew louder. "A whole group of them were killed in a battle three days ago. He was with the 52nd Regiment."

"The 52nd Regiment?" I stammered. "That's the Regiment Jesse's in!" "Mrs. Rolston," a voice interrupted. "This is for you." It was Mrs. Douglas, the store owner. She handed me a letter. She had tears in her eyes. The store grew silent. "Not Jesse, too!" sobbed Elizabeth. A wave of fear hit me. The words Jesse always used to close his letters swept through my mind... *"until separated by death"* .... *"until separated by death"* Could Jesse be gone forever? After an eternity of silence, Mrs. Douglas touched my hand. "Aren't you going to open it?" she asked gently. I gazed at her, praying deeply within my heart. The reality came that I must open that letter.

My fingers fumbled at the envelope. I felt weak. My eyes were so filled with tears that I could not see. Blinking wildly, they cleared to see the familiar script of his writing. I read silently: "Dearest Wife," it began. "I am writing to you for many reasons. First of all, I suppose you have heard about Henry. I miss him. It could have been me, but I guess the Good Lord was watching over me. It will be hard for Elizabeth. Help her all you can." I looked at Elizabeth. She was watching my eyes as I read to see what my letter revealed. I quickly returned my eyes to the page and continued to read. "The most important reason I am writing is good news. Caroline, I'm coming home!".... The words rang in my mind.

"He's alive!" I shouted. "And he's coming home! My Jesse is coming home!" Shouts of joy rang out. Tears of joy and relief flowed. The war was not over, but he was coming home to me! I turned to Elizabeth. Even through her tears for Henry, there was a smile for my Jesse. We hugged and were comforted, each of us feeling the emotions of the other. "We'll help you, Elizabeth. When Jesse gets here, things will be all right." "Thank you, Caroline. I'm so happy for you and I know you'll help me. Go home and tell your children their Daddy is coming home."

When the children found out, they were ecstatic! "Daddy's coming home!" they sang happily. As they sang and danced in the yard, it hit me. Everything is alright. Jesse is coming home! I looked at the house, the barn, the yard, the fields, and the sky. It suddenly looked brighter. The fields looked greener. The sky was cloudless. This is how my Jesse will see it when he comes.

The day of his return soon came and Johnny, now seven, posted himself on the front porch. When Jesse arrived, he made sure we knew it. "He's here! He's here! Mama! Daddy's here." "Yes, Johnny. He's here to stay!" I said as I ran out on the porch. There he was! He was thinner, but he looked sweeter and more handsome than I ever remembered. In his hand was a yellow tulip. "Caroline," he said. How good to hear him say my name once more. "Jesse! Welcome home. I've missed you!" "I've missed you, too," he said, handing me the tulip. "What's this?" I asked. "I went to town two years ago; I had to come back with a gift!" he laughed. "Oh! My dearest Jesse, I love you!" "I love you, too, Caroline." "My dear, dear Jesse. You are finally home to stay!" "Yes, dear wife...! *until separated by death.*"



## The Railroad Comes to Staunton

by  
Krista Summers\*

The first train that pulled into Staunton brought with it the dream of developing the city into a prosperous center of manufacturing and industry. The Virginia Central Railroad reached Staunton in March of 1854, linking Augusta County with Richmond. Because of its strategic route between the Shenendoah Valley and the state capital, the railroad was destined to play an important role in the war that followed. Though it did not run regularly at first, the people of Augusta County had great hopes for its future. Before the war, though, the railway considerably boosted the economy in Staunton.

When the Civil War started, more important matters than railroad industry took precedence. The fighting reached the county in 1864. The Union Army marched into Staunton on June 6 under the command of General David H. Hunter. The troops destroyed the depot and effectively destroyed the railroad for three miles and partially for three more miles. Colonel Lee soon had the railroad back in working order; it was a vital link to supplying the deep South with provisions, weapons, and men.

After the devastating war, the people of the South began to rebuild their lives, homes, and businesses. Impoverished, the South had to find a way to raise money to build a railroad before the Northern industrialists would invest their money. Every city in Virginia caught the railroad "fever" in the postbellum years. Many people envisioned factories springing up beside the tracks, and the price of their land skyrocketing. There were several railroad rivals who all wanted to see the Virginia tracks added to their own systems - the Baltimore and Ohio, Pennsylvania Central Railroad, the Norfolk and Western, and the Chesapeake and Ohio system. All these companies lobbied the General Assembly hoping to be the one to connect and consolidate the existing railroads.

Meanwhile, little construction had actually taken place. Virginia had laid 100 miles of track between 1865 and 1870. The total amount of railway miles in the state increased from 1,449 miles in 1870 to 1,893 miles in 1880. This was only an increase of 444 miles in ten years! The state badly needed a sole company to invest and build railroads and connect cities.

The county needed the approval of the voters in order to pledge money to a railroad company. Delegates in the Valley supported letting the B&O have the right of way. At the same time, officers of the C&O Railroad were eagerly campaigning for money to extend their railroad to the Ohio River. Richmond committed to giving \$2 million to the cause and asked that Augusta County pledge \$500 thousand. The bill went to the voters, where it was voted down. In the years that followed, the Augusta County voters repeatedly vetoed bills to subscribe money for the railroad. The railroad would also need land to be donated along the proposed route.

*\*Winner of the essay contest for High School Division; a student at Grace Christian High School.*



Even without money from the Valley, the C&O moved onward. In January of 1873, a train ran from Richmond to Huntington, West Virginia. The round-house and switching station was located in Staunton. Later, the C&O went bankrupt, the round-house burned down, and the Valley railroad was handed over to the B&O.

The railroad progress fared better under the B&O. Staunton voters braved a snowstorm in December of 1868 to overwhelmingly (396-4) earmark \$100,000 for the Valley Railroad. Augusta County once again was not in favor of contributing money. Heading a delegation of Valley citizens, General Robert E. Lee went to Baltimore in April of 1869 to convince the Baltimore City Council to give \$ 1 million to the Valley Railroad. The city honored its distinguished visitor by pledging \$1 million, while the B&O also matched the amount - contingent on the promised contributions along the route. Another famous railroad advocate for the Valley was mapmaker, Jedediah Hotchkiss.

The B&O announced that it would soon begin construction of the line from Harrisonburg to Staunton. Since Augusta still would not give any money toward the cost of the tracks, Staunton and Rockbridge County pledged more money. The work was contracted out, and construction began in earnest. In 1872, a section of track was being worked on only three miles from Staunton and the bridge over Middle River neared completion - progress could definitely be seen. Many of the men who worked on the line made their home in Staunton. In order to complete the line, the Valley Railroad mortgaged itself to raise a final \$3 million.

By 1874, B&O trains made the daily trip from Staunton to Baltimore. Railroads continued to lace their way through Augusta County. Waynesboro was connected with the railroad around 1880. The B&O faced more difficulties in the following years; some lengths of track went for years without being worked on. The financial troubles were eventually overcome, and Staunton was linked with a network of cities and states.

It took many years and a great deal of work to connect Staunton with a huge railway system. Though it was difficult, many lived to see their dreams of prosperity for the Valley town come true. During the "boom years" (from around 1870 to 1900) Staunton flourished like never before. The vastly improved rail service made Staunton one of the Commonwealth's leading cities in mercantile. The fertile land of Augusta produced numerous agricultural products that were shipped to the busy coastal cities of the east and northeast. In return, the industrialized East sent back a variety of manufactured goods and luxuries, and Staunton merchants prospered. During the "boom years", hundreds of businesses were established in Staunton - some of which still survive today. The warehouses, wholesale groceries, and livery stables that sprang up around the train depot to accommodate the trade gave the area the name "The Wharf".

During the late 1880's, the effects of the railroad on Staunton could be clearly seen. During that day, according to *The Augusta County History* - "Wholesale and retail trade had expanded. Banks, insurance companies, and investment in railroads and extractive industries had also made steady progress." *The Valley Virginian* of 1884 quoted that, "One can hardly throw a stone upon Main, Augusta or New Streets without hitting a grocery and provision dealer." A section of the *Staunton Dispatch and News Historical and Industrial Edition* of 1906 describes Staunton as "the county-seat of Augusta County, one of the largest and richest counties in the State." The article recognized that the location of Staunton at the intersection of the B&O and C&O railroads was the cause for its impressive economic development. The city became known as a financial capital throughout all of Virginia and West Virginia. Staunton also experienced a dramatic population growth near the turn of the century.

Today, the railroad depot is used by Amtrak. The Wharf is home to many businesses, shops, and restaurants. I believe that much of Staunton's prosperity in its early days can be credited to the men and women who worked energetically to link Staunton with the rest of our nation by developing the Valley railroad system. The result of their efforts - more than one hundred years ago - can still be seen today.



# Bethel Presbyterian Church\*

1746 – 1996

by  
Charlotte Williams

Through 250 years, Bethel Presbyterian Church has been a part of the spiritual life of the community around Greenville, Middlebrook and Mint Spring. In 1746, the Reverend John Blair organized four churches: New Providence, Timber Ridge, Forks of the James and North Mountain. Later, Forks of the James would become New Monmouth and North Mountain Meetinghouse became Bethel and Hebron. Before John Blair arrived in the Valley in 1745, North Mountain was one of the preaching points in John Craig's extensive parish. In October 1741, he baptized eight children "at North Mountain Meetinghouse" which indicates that North Mountain was one of the early log meetinghouses.

By 1779 the old building at North Mountain was in need of repair and also the center of the population had shifted to the east, so a new building was erected on the present site and called **Bethel**. It was built of logs, about sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. This building became famous for its connection with the struggle for political and religious freedom in Virginia. The communion table in the present building came from this church.

At the time of the Revolution the Church of England was the established Church in Virginia and all residents were taxed for its support. In 1784 Hanover Presbytery met at Bethel and adopted a memorial to the General Assembly protesting special privileges to any one denomination. It also called for a convention to be held at Bethel the next August, which adopted a memorial to the General Assembly on Religious Freedom. These two memorials led to the adoption of Thomas Jefferson's famous bill **An Act for establishing Religious Freedom**, and under the leadership of James Madison the principles of these resolutions were embodied in the Constitution, which provided that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The first brick church stood on the site of the present building and was erected in 1821. It was forty-eight feet wide and fifty-eight feet long and faced east and west. It was completed in 1822 at a cost of something over \$4,000, and the pews were rented to the families of the congregation.

The present building was dedicated on May 12, 1889, with Dr. James Murray preaching the dedicatory sermon the first sermon to be recorded in Bethel's history.

In the fall of 1887 the contractor who was consulted about making some repairs on the church building reported that the walls were in such bad condition that he would not advise trying to repair them. This was the result of a severe snow storm the weight of which had sprung the walls. They began taking down the old building on May 25, 1888. The good brick were used in the new structure and others were burnt on the ground. It was completed

*\*Presented at the Spring Meeting of the Society at Bethel Presbyterian Church.*

in April of the next year and cost something over \$6,000. In 1912 the Sunday School building was added to the rear of the auditorium at a cost of over \$7,000. This was the first rural education building to be built in the Southern Presbyterian Church. In 1921 the interior was remodeled and a pipe organ was installed. The doors, pulpit and pulpit railing were made from walnut logs taken from the old Bumgardner distillery which was located on the stream in front of the church. The pulpit seat came from the first brick building.

On November 17, 1927, as the congregation arrived at Bethel, they discovered the church was on fire. Insurance covered the damage with the exception of the organ. A memorial window which now fills the arch behind the pulpit, and the memorial stained glass windows were installed when the church was repaired.

In observance of Bethel's 200th anniversary in 1946, Dr. Herbert S. Turner published "Bethel and Her Ministers", a history of the church. In 1974, Dr. Turner and the Rev. Dr. James Sprunt co-authored an addition covering the years of 1946-1974 to "Bethel and Her Ministers."

## Ministers of Bethel

Archibald Scott	1778 - 1800
William McPheeters	1806 - 1810
Robert H. Chapman	1817 - 1821
Francis McFarland	1823 - 1836
A. B. McCorkle	1837 - 1840
Francis McFarland	1841 - 1871
(Moderator of the General Assembly of 1856)	
James Murray	1868 - 1891
R. A. Lapsley	1892 - 1904
C. L. Altfather	1904 - 1910
William Denham	1911 - 1917
Herbert S. Turner	1919 - 1947
Robert Murphy Williams	1948 - 1951
James T. Womack	1952 - 1955
James Sprunt	1957 - 1968
Clifford D. Caldwell	1969 - 1992
Roy W. Howard	1993 -



# Staunton: Only Yesterday\*

by  
Patricia H. Menk

Staunton is a beautiful small city in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, noted for its variety of Victorian and late 19th century architecture, its narrow, winding streets and its many hills. Time seems to go slowly here and change does not appear to come easily but distance lends perspective to events we may not note in the immediacy of every day. So, come with me now, as we go back almost fifty years - to the Staunton I first knew and probably many of you knew also. "Only Yesterday"- how different it was- and yet how familiar!

It is 1950. There were no interstate highways - 81 and 64 were not yet even on the drawing boards. There were no shopping malls (the word may not have even been invented) and the downtown streets were thronged on Saturday, the busiest shopping day of the week. The C&O underpass at Rt 11 and 250 was the "worst bottleneck in the state" as ALL the traffic from any direction had to go through that romantic, artistic infuriating arch. There was no Frontier Museum, the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace was still a "shrine" and in a precarious state, financially and physically. The Skyline Drive was barely 10 years old and the Blue Ridge Parkway was not yet completed. Commerce Road, the new by-pass around Staunton would open in a few months.

The campus at Mary Baldwin College lay between New and Market Street. That was the steepest hill in the city and was always good for taking visitors to the top and driving them down to the Stonewall Jackson Hotel while they held their breath. It was so steep that there were literally steps in various places on the sidewalk so one could walk up it without tipping over backwards. No one had yet proposed a leash law and dogs ran freely around the city. There were six trains a day, three in each direction. They were named the Fast Flying Virginian, the Sportsman and the flagship (air conditioned throughout), the George Washington. The train station WAS a train station - not a restaurant. There were 7 or 8 daily Trailway buses lumbering through our narrow streets as well (most of which still permitted two way traffic and parking on both sides). The industrial "boomlet" of the 1950's still lay in the future. Westinghouse's and American Safety Razor's proposed moves from Brooklyn were only rumors 45 years ago. There was a horse racing track around the lake (not yet called Tams Lake) in Gypsy Hill Park and races were held there although the betting was done surreptitiously. There was a wonderful "Round Barn" where Earl Jones kept horses for the children to ride and every September there was a six day "Staunton Virginia State Fair" complete with nightly fireworks, acrobats, trained animals, and seven, "count them ladies and gentlemen" entertainment centers on the Midway, including "Goldies Hollywood Band" the "Manhattan Rockets", and the "Avalon troop". It was truly an agricul-

tural fair as well, with sheep, hogs, chickens, cattle, goats and displays of vegetables, fruits, flowers, baked goods, jellies and home crafts.

However, this was not a "Leave it to Beaver" world and sentimental nostalgia quickly becomes self indulgent. Our purpose is to examine a small community which perceived itself and was perceived by others as essentially conservative, unchanging where nothing much ever happened and to see how accurate that perception was or in what way it was flawed. Nor is this meant to suggest that everything was right with our world 50 years ago and everything is wrong now. The very fact that we have changed so much suggests that we did find things that needed to be changed.

In 1951, Staunton described itself as "A City of Tradition and Progress in the Heart of the Shenandoah Valley". By 1954 the Chamber of Commerce slogan declared Staunton was "The Queen City of the Shenandoah Valley; a Progressive City Rich in Heritage". That same slogan remains today.

The 1950 census indicated Staunton's population at 19,927 (which counted Western State, VSDB, Mary Baldwin, SMA and Stuart Hall's residents). The population of Staunton in the 1990 census was listed as 24,461 (no longer counting Western State or SMA but counting the prison population instead). This is surely a modest increase for a 40 plus year period and might suggest Staunton was losing as well as gaining citizens. However, a significant difference in the time frame emerges when we look at the area of the city. In 1950, the city encompassed about 4 1/3 square miles; by 1990, thanks to several annexations, the area within the city limits was almost 20 square miles. The Staunton of the 1950's was compact, with homes and businesses close to each other. A look at the downtown area indicates that almost all citizen needs were available in an area four blocks deep and five or six blocks long, bounded by Johnson, Beverley, and Frederick street, running east and west and Coalter to Lewis street running north and south. There was some commercial activity through the C & O underpass on Greenville Ave (mostly automobile sales and services), on Middlebrook Road up to Crafton's Park and homes followed Coalter, New, Augusta, and Central north for a mile or two and west on Churchville Avenue to Gypsy Hill Park but not much beyond. Once one was "downtown" and had found a place to park (no meters and only the Hardy parking lot), one could pretty well walk to stores, banks, movies, the library, the Y and a broad choice of churches and retail establishments. The Staunton of 1996 is much more dispersed; sociologists and psychologists can happily spend hours explaining the significance of this change but we will only note that it is so.

The city directories are mines of information. Let's pursue this a little more:

For a small city, Staunton was (and is) blessed with three city parks whose acreage totaled 310 acres. We would recognize the main section of Gypsy Hill Park as it was in 1950- a two lane paved road encircled the area; there was a swimming pool, smaller than the present one, operated by the Fire Dept (who provided wonderful Bar-B-Q chicken near the pool on the Fourth of July). But the pool was spring fed and the water was icy - the early morning life saving and swimming classes had lots of teeth chattering children. There was a high diving board, a low one, primitive locker facilities and modest entry fees - 25¢ and 50¢. There was also the "bear cage"; it usually held an unhappy raccoon or two; the deer up on the hill and peacocks; ducks and swans were in the pond, but no colored lights, no little train, no dogwood trees (they were planted in the mid-1960's) a much less elaborate band stand. The Monday night summer concerts were the same. Children ran around and around the bandstand, dogs barked, parents fanned themselves and the band played on. There was a Kiwanis baseball field (no lights or electric score board) and the city baseball field where it is now. There were two tennis courts. The Garden Center building had recently been

\*As presented to the Augusta County Historical Society, March 4, 1996

given into the care of the Women's Federation of Garden Clubs and all kinds of groups, i.e. Young Men's Civic Club, Hospital Auxiliary bazaars, bridge and dance groups met there - and of course garden clubs, (there were 14 in the city in 1950). As yet there was no stadium (football was played in front of the Lee High School building on Churchville Avenue). There was a nine hole municipal golf course.

Staunton was a segregated community in 1950; there were separate schools, churches, public parks, boarding houses and funeral parlors. There were distinct residential areas (well if informally understood) and a modest but thriving black business community including a bevy of black cateresses (Rose Smith, Viola Becks, Faye Gaines), a small professional group (Dr. Waller, several dentists, teachers, preachers). There were small businesses, such as Alonzo Harden's construction and the Jones brothers funeral home. The walls of separation were crumbling, but it was hard to see it in 1950 and the directories we are consulting carefully put a small "c" in parenthesis (for colored) in their listing of city facilities.

In 1950, the City Council agreed to permit a group of black citizens including Alonzo Harden, Kenneth Jones, George Turner and Irene Givens) to administer a recreation program at Montgomery Hall Park. Although a very dangerous railroad crossing hindered access to the place, this park rapidly became the center of African American families' social and religious activities. From up and down the Valley, groups came to hold innumerable picnics and family reunions; there were singing and music groups, occasional lecturers, and revivals. There was a small swimming pool but the major improvements to the upper hill and to the house were to be far in the future.

The third park was, of course, Betsy Bell, "recently willed to the city" by Charles Catlett with the curious provision that the City Council visit the summit once a year (not an easy thing to do in the era before four wheel drives) and that a clearing in the shape of a cross be kept on each of the four sides.

These were the years immediately after World War II and Staunton was eager to get on with the technological improvements and civic necessities which the five years of war had denied. Staunton's 9,200 telephones went to dial service in January, 1950. There were weeks of instruction and information in the News Leader about how to do it and how much the cheerful voice of the operator would be missed. Mayor Grubert placed the first call on the new system on January 28, 1950, and customers were assured that one could still get an operator by pressing O. (They probably had more success than we do now). All of the telephone numbers started with 5 (no 88) followed by four numbers. There were no area codes; long distance was done by the operator.

Staunton had 60 miles of streets, 50 of which were paved; 50 miles of sewer lines, although perhaps as many as 25% of homes in some areas had no indoor plumbing. The municipal water supply was North River dam and some wells and in 1951 a half million dollar filtration plant was completed on Two Mile Hill. No Elkhorn Lake as yet and particularly in 1949 a serious drought posed water supply problems for the city and county. There were 20 policemen (all white males of course), one station 3 desk clerks and 5 police cars. The one fire department had 4 salaried employees (the station) was on Central Avenue where the famous cave in had occurred), 50 volunteers, and 8 pieces of motor equipment (not counting the obsolete Jumbo rusting away in a field). Some of the volunteers were also the nucleus of a Rescue Squad but no formal organization yet existed. Ambulance service was provided by both the Henry and Hamrick Funeral Homes. Henry's had recently moved to 507 West Beverley St. and advertised that there was "always a lady in attendance". The Jones's had moved from Quarry Street to 813 North Augusta (where the business is still) in

1949. Forty nine years later they would retire, respected by the community and loved by those whom they had comforted and sustained.

The Directory says there were 50 manufacturing establishments employing 5,000 people in the city: We produced furniture (Basic Witz), woolens, flour (White Star Mills) hosiery, brick, boxes, cement, feed, books and magazines, (McClure, Schmid), dairy products (Maple Lawn Dairy was in the city limits, part of it being where the present Lee High is located) and apples - lots and lots of apples. There was an ice plant, cold storage facilities, a horse and cattle market, and city stockyards.

Although we were a compact community, Stauntonians long ago embraced the American love affair with automobiles. Sales, services, tires and parts were available within the city; notice the locations of such familiar names as Augusta Motor Sales (New St) Central Garage (Central) Coiner Parts (Central), Community Motor (Central) Firestone Tires, (West Beverley), Simmons Parts, (S. Augusta), Goodyear, (Central). (No attempt on the gas stations but they were plentiful - attendants pumped your gas, checked your oil, washed your windshield with a pleasant "thank you".)

Since this was the government and financial hub of Augusta County (this was true 50 years ago), there were 6 banks, four of whom were on each corner of the Augusta and Beverley Street intersection. Their proud boast was that none of them had failed during the Depression. Do you remember, Augusta National Bank, Farmer and Merchant's 1891 (The Friendly Bank, In the Heart of the Apple Belt, Service, Safety and Strength); National Valley Bank of Staunton, "Two Doors of Opportunity" In the Heart of the Business Center (1865); Planters Bank and Trust Co, "Serving Augusta County and the City of Staunton" and Staunton National Bank, "Once a Customer always one". The names of the presidents, vice presidents, directors are a roll call of Staunton's community and business leaders - a power structure that was mostly honest, hardworking, intelligent, discreet, moral - but a pretty closed network with family and financial ties that were generational.

There were 23 churches (18 white and 5 black) several whose origins dated from the early 19th century (one, Trinity in the 1760's.) They were mostly "downtown" church. And, of course there were the schools and the college; Dunsmore Business College, SMA, Stuart Hall, AMA (which always seemed to be part of Staunton even though it was at Fort Defiance), VSDB and several private kindergartens, including Mrs. Calhoun's which had elaborate advertisements often with pictures of "graduation". Only "appropriate" children were accepted. There was a school at St. Francis taught by the Sisters of Charity. The heavy white vehicle (bus?) with the slogan "Walsh Lawn" traversed the Staunton hills gathering up black day care students. Queen Miller had retired in 1948 after 39 years but the Effie Ann Johnson Day Care Center continued on Augusta Street near Ebenezer Baptist Church

The public schools reflected the dual nature of public education in 1950. There was Stonewall Jackson Primary (1-3), T. J. Elementary (4-7) and a five year high school Robert E. Lee (8-12). There was also D. Webster Davis (the building is still standing on Sunnyside St.), T. C. Edmunds (demolished) and Booker T. Washington High School on Johnson Street Hill. There was also a county school in the city limits (Beverly Manor Elementary) later to be made famous by the Statler Brothers.

Schools began with grade one (no kindergarten) and because no new construction had been undertaken since 1939 were terribly crowded. Stonewall Jackson was on a double shift - 9-12; 1-4 (with the same teachers). A bond issue had been proposed only to be delayed by the outbreak of the Korean War and by the general reluctance of the city government to borrow money or raise taxes. The school day opened with the Pledge of Allegiance



and salute to the Flag, the Lord's Prayer spoken in unison and home room announcements. There were no public address systems or computers, but Lee High did have typewriters and sewing machines. Principals could (and did) administer corporal punishment. The dress code provided that no blue jeans would be worn to school (or shorts or slacks on girls). Male teachers wore coats and ties with trimmed hair (no beards) and I remember how shocked we all were shortly afterwards with the Beatles' hair length and other things. Women of course wore dresses and hose. School children rode city buses using passes (which even first graders seemed to manage). They intermingled and often overwhelmed regular passengers. The drivers had no monitors and were long suffering. Since they were not regular school buses, no one had to stop when they loaded or unloaded - although many people did. Classes were "tracked" (a practice discontinued in 1951) but everyone, including the children themselves, knew who was "slow". There were high expectations (some in this audience can well remember the names of some of the "dragons" and the secret nicknames the children bestowed on them). Parents attended school functions but were not encouraged to come into the classrooms - that was the domain of the teacher. The PTA's were active although there was some question about the "Red" leanings on the "national" level. Children who found it difficult to keep up for whatever reason were either not identified or not visible.

What else would we find if we were to return to Downtown in the 1950's? There were 20 barber shops two of which were "c". Some patrons still were shaved daily in their favorite shop and their mugs and shaving brushes stood on shelves above the sink. Do you remember Ideal, Modern, Central (still there)? There were two shoe shine parlors, one in the train station. There were only 7 barbershops listed in the 1994 Directory. Forty-five years ago there were 17 beauty parlors, today there are 26 but these numbers are suspect; too many people provide informal services in their homes. There was Boyd's, Mix-Max, Modern, Peerless, Vanity Fair - many others. There were no mixed gender shops (even manicurists in barbershops were viewed with some suspicion) nor were there "tanning" facilities. There were 4 taxi companies (Arnold's, City, Jones and Valley Radio). Mothers had no qualms about putting small children in Mr. Jones' cabs to be transported to Mrs. Brooks Kindergarden at Trinity or to be picked up at noon from Stonewall Jackson school. The on duty policeman, Mr. Gayhart saw that the right child got in the right cab. Jones Taxi met all incoming trains to see that Mary Baldwin College "young ladies" were safely taken up the hill when they returned from weekends or vacations.

Beverly Book Store was "downtown" as was Bear China and Gift Shop, the Checkerboard, Holt's China, Lang's Jewelry. There were ladies dress shops - Timberlakes, Schwarzschild's, Helen Eastman, New York Dress Shop, Carroll House and men's "furnishings" such as The Men's Store and Barth Weinburg. One store, perhaps it was Carroll House, still had the little baskets on wires in which the saleslady put your money and a sales slip and it whirled away overhead to the cashier who sat in the back on the next floor overlooking the proceedings. She put your change in the basket and you got it back at which time you were handed your purchases. There were, of course, drug stores, Central, Dodd's and Thomas Hogshead. In addition to pharmaceutical needs, these drug stores had little tables and chairs and lunches and ice cream sodas were served. Central had a counter as well. Sears and Montgomery Ward were downtown as was Penney's and Leggett's (who had remodeled extensively their building and had added a new third floor (or fourth if you counted the basement). It had an elevator (self service). Woolworth's was in the clock tower building and McCrory's two doors down and 7 shoe stores, Hollidays, Trott, Bennie's Electric, Naturalizer. One could use an X ray machine and view the bones in one's foot to

be sure the new pair fit properly (later, of course, outlawed). Did you need a hammer, nails, can opener? There was Ast Hardware and Worthington's fascinating dark caverns of stores with garbage pails teetering precariously on upper shelves and rakes and hoes and seed packets and lawn mowers. Often what you wanted was in the basement and one descended narrow wooden steps to the lower depths where you could hear Lewis Creek running beyond the basement walls. How about some furniture? Wall's Colonial House, Augusta Furniture, Finkels, Star Furniture Co were all downtown or one could go to Ford's newly opened in Verona. The florists, Rask, Hamrick and Fallon were there along with Miles Music Store, Cline's and Loewner's Music Shop. The big sale item in 1950-51 was the new "45" record with an inexpensive, portable turn table. Another innovation was a washeteria (111 N. Augusta) but Staunton Steam, White Way Laundry, Woodward and Shippletts kept our clothes and sheets in order.

Did you need some groceries? There were 4 grocery stores downtown, Reids, Kroger, A&P, Houffs but others (Jimmy Anderson, on Springhill, Woodlee, Rows "Friendly" Store on Greenville Ave. Lockridges and Parkway) were nearer residential sections. Stanley Meat Market and others were specialty stores much patronized. All of these were small, personal and the owners and employees became friends to their patrons. Some stores delivered your groceries and would even put the meat and lettuce in your refrigerator if you were not at home. There were no pizza shops or drive in hamburger stands (except the incomparable Wrights on Greenville Ave. - in case you don't know, you drove your car in, parked by a menu, and called your choice in on a telephone and a young person brought it to your car on a tray which fastened on the car door.) Milk, butter, and cottage cheese were delivered three times a week to your door (I do not recall skim milk or 2% - in those days the Milk Commission was concerned with being sure enough butter fat was in the milk not taking it out) but there was homogenized, regular with the cream on top of a glass bottle, chocolate milk and buttermilk available. There was also an egg man (mine was Mr. Showalter) who would bring eggs once a week to your home. In the early 50's small trucks would patrol city streets selling fresh vegetables and the "Good Humor Man" rang his bell all summer long.

There were not many restaurants of the quality and choice we have today. Stauntonians did not eat out on social occasions (except at the country club). One entertained at home with candles, linen and silver. Or one went to individually owned "camps" in Deerfield, and West Augusta or to the lakes and mountains of the national and state forests and parks. Remember Bear Trap Inn?. Some names of downtown restaurants will be familiar to you. Armstrong's Cafe, Atlantic Lunch, Chris's Higgins (the one where the murder took place), Joe's Quick Lunch, Mary's Lunch. Then there was Jollivue Restaurant, the Triangle Tea Room, famous for its chicken salad. and, of course, Ingleside. There were no extra buildings in the 1950's at Ingleside, just the main hotel with a magnificent stone fireplace, white columns, the superior Trent golf course and that view of the mountains which made the hazardous turnoff from Rt 11 almost worthwhile. Many churches particularly the country churches, would have turkey, ham and oyster suppers as fund raising activities. One could go each Sunday for six weeks or more in the fall and eat royally usually for \$1.50 or \$2.00 a person.

Likewise, there were not many motels - there were private tourist homes, mostly rooms in private dwellings - i.e. Maple Lodge on North Augusta. The directory lists 5 hotels, - the Beverley, "newly furnished thruout" with rooms at \$2.50 and up. There was the Stonewall Jackson Hotel, whose ballroom and crystal dining room were the scene of many banquets, speeches, wedding receptions, benefit parties and civic club occasions. Ingleside, of course, and the Whitmore on 26 N. Central provided more economical



accommodations. The Arcadia Hotel on Beverley Street had burned in a spectacular fire in 1948. It had not been rebuilt. For African-American tourists and out of town visitors, there was a boarding house/hotel near the black churches on North Augusta Street.

This was a professional town - mostly an all white male one. There were 26 lawyers and 25 physicians. Curiously the directory lists 56 nurses- all female - with their addresses and telephone numbers. Presumably these were "private duty" nurses who went to private homes as well as perhaps working at the hospital. No nurses are listed separately in the 1994 directory. The only nursing home was Huffer's .

Three labor unions are listed; Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Motion Picture Operators and Textile Workers Union. Neither the directory nor the newspapers make much mention of them. This was a time of numerous and bitter postwar strikes, particularly in coal, steel and automobile factories and President Truman struggled with the bitterness and the Taft Hartley legislation. Staunton was not known as a labor friendly town and union organizers found their tasks little encouraged.

What could you do 50 years ago for recreation? There were 3 active and well patronized movie theaters - the Dixie, the newly renovated Visualite (which is really a Beaux Art treasure) with its "cyclorama" screen, and there was the Strand- later made famous by the Statler Brothers: I will mention only one movie by name (you see the others on American Movie Classics) but there was a three day showing of John Hodiak and Nancy Davis in "Night into Morning" - Who? On May 15, 1950, there was a gala opening of the Skyline Drive In Theater as "Enjoy a Picture in Nature's Air Conditioning under the Stars"... There were baseball games in the summer and Monday night summer concerts by the Stonewall Brigade Band. Each program opened by playing "Dixie" and concluded with the "Star Spangled Banner" - some things do not change in Staunton. One could fish, swim, hike, read books from the public library, but one could not do most of these things on Sunday. There were no Sunday movies, or baseball, no stores were open (except for an emergency pharmacy which rotated among themselves). Augusta County supervisors argued for days over a proposal to ban fishing on Sunday in Augusta County's rivers and streams. They voted 4-2 to do so and it took special action from the state legislature to settle the issue. The fishermen prevailed eventually but only if they had written permission from the owners of the land from whose banks they fished. You could go to church on Sunday night - and often Wednesday night as well.

Staunton might be a city of schools and churches ( as it was once described rather snidely) but it was also a city of innumerable fraternal and civic clubs both for men and women. A partial list includes Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Exchange, Young Men's Civic, Business and Professional Women, Masons, Knights of Columbus, Boy and Girl Scouts (Camp Shenandoah for the Boy Scouts opened in July 1950 near Swoope), Eagles, Saints and Sinners, Women and Jr. Women's Clubs, League of Women Voters, Moose, Odd Fellows, Elks, 14 plus Garden Clubs and the Chamber of Commerce. The campaign to build KDH created or enhanced the Florence Nightingale, Deane Holt and Emily Smith Auxiliaries and the American Legion, VFW and other veterans organizations flourished. There was the DAR, Daughters of the Confederacy, the Red Cross, the TB Association and the YMCA. The African-American community had many fraternal and community organizations as well as an active NAACP. The King Series provided concerts lectures and drama productions for the community (Note that the National Symphony came every year, once just for a childrens' concert sponsored by the PTA)..

The effect of inflation is difficult to appreciate until one returns to a half century ago to review some prices. This is not really a very valid exercise because I have no compa-

rable figures for wages and hours (except that in 1950, the City Council agreed that policemen might have a full day off once a week) Still it is always fun to gasp and say "I don't believe it" so here goes: Sometime between 1948 and 1950 these prices could be found in the News Leader:

Bananas 15¢ a lb; lemons 12 1/2¢ a lb; Imperial Ice Cream, 69¢ a quart; Sirloin Steak at Reids 73¢ a lb. A permanent wave cost \$6.50; Peerless Salon charged \$15.00; brass table lamps \$3.98; Men's suits were \$35.00 at Leggetts; Thanksgiving dinner at the newly opened Howard Johnson's at the entrance to Sky Line Drive was \$2.50; at Jollivue the weekend special was \$1.25. Ball point pens which would write for three years sold for 98¢; rubber or leather heels for your shoes were \$2.98; a 6 room house near Staunton with lights, garage, smoke house, stable and 4 acres was listed for \$3200, with \$500 in cash and the rest for \$50 a month. A Dodge car with full equipment, a sedan, was \$1895; a Firestone gas range sold for \$99.95; women's hose were \$1.25 a pair and men's pajamas \$3.95. Bath towels at Penney's were 48¢.

In addition to the city directories, much of my information has come from the various editions of the Staunton News Leader. In this era, the editor and publisher was E. Walton Opie and Lewis Knowles was the city editor. A year's subscription cost \$5.00 and a single issue was 15¢. Your paper was delivered to your door or could be bought at Quicks or Valley News Stand. There were two editions a day - morning and afternoon. Before 1950 the scarcity and price of newsprint had limited the size but by mid century the paper was about the size of the present one omitting the advertising inserts. After 1950, there were many more pictures, particularly of brides; photographic essays appeared, a Boy's and Girl's page was added. Obituaries which had been tactfully placed toward the back now appeared in its present location (page 2). Although farm and produce prices had been reported regularly, it was not until Sept. 1950 that the News Leader printed the stockmarket quotations. There were regular features "The Old Judge Says..." and a daily menu with recipes, appeared. There were a few comic strips - Blondie, Popeye, Rusty Riley, They'll Do It Everytime. There were no color comics. Some curious preferences emerged. When Elizabeth Taylor became engaged to Conrad Hilton Jr., no less than 4 stories about her appeared - with pictures. Two were on the front page. There were cigarette and a few beer ads and of course social notices, sales and economic information, national and some international news as well as local stories. The cigarette ads seem today to be from another world. Camels advertised "Not a Single Case of Throat irritation due to smoking Camels"; Philip Morris declared "We Dare Them All" and invited its patrons to light up, expel the smoke through one's nose, (without inhaling) and then try another cigarette of any other brand and notice the difference. The ubiquitous Johnny called for Philip Morris in all their ads.

There were no television program notes but since Staunton had a radio station, WTON, radio schedules were printed daily. There were editorials, of course and letters to the editor, usually signed anonymously and apparently seldom from women, political cartoons (no more enlightening than at present). But what the paper didn't have is equally interesting. All KDH birth announcements were to married couples (if one can judge by the listings). There were very few pictures of black persons and not many of women of either race. And there was no "agony" column in which persons sought contact (Christian or otherwise) with others of the opposite (or the same) sex. In truth, there was not much news of minorities of any kind but there were a few signs that changes were coming. A black attorney applied to enter U. Va. Law School for graduate work and later there were applications for Medical School as well. An editorial tentatively approved the request, carefully specifying graduate study but the courts did not act on these ideas before 1954.

Armstead Booth introduced legislation to end segregation on public transportation systems and to put in place an inter-racial state commission, but the Virginia Senate Judiciary Committee killed the proposal. It was introduced in subsequent years. There was no mention in the Staunton paper of Truman's integration of the Armed Forces (by executive order) in spite of the events after June 27, 1950 but there soon would be.

In a similar vein, an editorial requested the state legislature to continue to prohibit women from serving on juries. Later in 1950, a story reported that the Episcopal diocese had defeated a motion by 93-89 to allow women to serve on church vestries.

A story that occupied many Stauntonians minds and prayers in 1950 was the polio epidemic which began in Wythe county in June and before cold weather, the public health office reported over 500 cases (several in Staunton) and 57 dead. In some areas schools delayed opening. There was a major effort to eradicate flies in the city (although no evidence connected flies with spreading polio). The fear was palpable - no one knew how or why or how to treat or cure. Parents a half century ago lived with tension we can only partly imagine today. Montgomery Ward sold wallpaper impregnated with DDT. It will "protect your children" they declared.

An on going effort and eventual triumph for the Staunton community was to build a new King's Daughters' Hospital to replace the small, inadequate facility on Frederick Street. This is not the time or place to recount the details of this remarkable campaign and the mostly women who conducted it, but between 1948 and 1951 \$2 1/2 million was raised, more than 1 million from this community. Ground was broken at the Augusta Street location on December 28, 1948 (Woodrow Wilson's birthday as Emily Smith pointed out) and the building was opened in March, 1951. It was a community effort like no other in our local history. Everyone participated and the organization was superb. One small story illustrates the point. Schwarschild's Dress Shop had been in Staunton only a short time but the owners joined the other merchants in offering support for the hospital campaign. An advertisement in the paper ran for several editions. "Your new dress can wait", it read, "KDH needs your money NOW".

One or two other foreshadowings of things to come. In 1951, a local insurance company (Callison) ran a modest ad offering Hospital Insurance to any who wished to purchase it. Later that year, DuPont announced that it would pay for its employees hospital policies.

The future was coming closer. In 1949, lots and home sites in Valley View subdivision were offered for sale; in 1950, lots in Hillcrest and Skymont were offered at auction. "New and Beautiful Addition" read the notices. We needed the space - the housing shortage was acute - but our small, compact little town, would never be the same again.

#### Trivia:

I have made no mention of the events which started on June 27 (the invasion of South Korea by North Korea) and the dismaying military news throughout the rest of the year. Nor have I mentioned the McCarthy hearings, the attempt to assassinate Truman, the spy stories, the crises in Europe, the atomic bomb tests, the extension of the draft and the calling up of Staunton men a scant five years after the World War had ended. Even the weather was not kind to us in 1950. There was drought, in the spring with a serious water shortage, later floods, rain, sleet and deep snow in Nov./Dec. On Dec. 30, a major downtown fire (McCrory Building) threatened the whole block. Fortunately, the fire walls held.

Notes on General Grant and the Stonewall Brigade Band: 3/4,1996

Kit Carter and comment about band playing for him: Marshall Brice and Elizabeth McCue:References:

Virginia seceded from the Union April 17, 1861; Staunton became a mobilization center and a number of local military companies were attached to the 5th Virginia Regiment which later became part of the Stonewall Brigade. Some of the men involved were also members of the Staunton Mountain Sax Horn Band (organized 1855). They and their instruments accompanied the Regiment throughout the next four years of triumph and tragedy and would ever after be identified as the Stonewall Brigade Band. The war ended on April 12, 1865 at Appomattox with the formal ceremonies of capitulation. General John B. Gordon's Corps was the first to march to where General Grant and the Union forces waited. Attached to this group were seven members of the Stonewall Brigade Band. Grant was generous in victory sending rations to the starving Confederate army, allowing the men to keep their horses for spring plowing and permitting the Stonewall Brigade Band to keep its instruments, the band wagon not having been damaged throughout the conflict. Those instruments are now in the Band Museum at Gypsy Hill Park.

The band returned to Staunton, (keeping its wartime name), increased in size and skill, although they found it hard to secure uniforms for several years. They "resolutely" tried to stay above the turbulent passions of the Reconstruction Era - playing at jousting tournaments on the meadows of VSDB, in torchlight parades, helping the Ladies Cemetery Committee raise money for the Confederate plot at Thornrose. The band played and Staunton observed Washington's Birthday and Independence Day (July 4). When the Reconstruction Governor, Francis H. Pierpont visited the town, the band played for him (not without criticism) and played for the other notables staying at the American and Virginia hotels without regard to their politics. By January, 1870, Virginia was back in the Union and the band had gained state and regional reputation.

In 1874, President and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant came though Staunton on the train on their way to White Sulphur Springs. The train stopped. Grant got off and went to the portico of the American Hotel where the Mayor of Staunton, H. K. Trout, welcomed the President to the city. The Stonewall Brigade Band serenaded him playing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" with the instruments he had allowed them to keep nine years before. Grant was impressed and wrote a gracious note thanking the Band.

Ten more years passed. The first Democratic president to be elected since 1856, Grover Cleveland, was to be inaugurated and the Stonewall Brigade Band was invited to march in the parade honoring him on March 4, 1885. At the same time, former President Grant disgraced and almost penniless, lay dying in New York. Learning of this, the Stonewall Brigade Band sent him and his family a note of sympathy. Grant died on July 23, 1885 (four months later) and his son invited the Stonewall Brigade Band to march in Grant's funeral procession in New York City. They accepted and Stonewall Jackson's band paid honor to the man who had saved the Union when they marched on August 8, 1885 at Grant's funeral.



### IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Rudolph Bumgardner, Jr.  
Constance Coiner Duarte  
Brownie Williams Henkel  
Mrs. Thomas W. Rorrer, Jr.

### NEW MEMBERS

Willy Bach, Mount Sidney, Virginia  
Michelle Bley, Palm Harbor, Florida  
Forrest Fauber, Lynchburg, Virginia  
Blair Lovern, Waynesboro, Virginia  
H. Juhling McClung, Blacklick, Ohio  
Timothy E. Peterman, Kansas City, Missouri  
Nadine Peterson, Sanger, California  
Eve Watters, Charlottesville, Virginia  
Nancy Moodmansee, Mount Sidney, Virginia

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